

<https://bluebuzzmusic.com/derek-piotr-interview/>

Interview With Composer and Music Producer Derek Piotr



We recently spoke with Derek Piotr, a New England-based composer and music producer from Poland. Piotr primarily records abstract work that deals with sampling the human voice but has recently been on a DJ tour.

How would you describe your work? Your background in music?

I am maybe not the right person to try to describe my work, but my aims are definitely to create a kind of earthy intimacy through sampling audio, mostly acoustic sources, and creating something electro-acoustic with it. My work has taken many forms and been introduced in many situations, dance installations, train stations, libraries, churches, record shops, and I can't pin down what that looks like every time, more what I'm searching for: some kind of emotional elevation, truth, excitement. Right now I am doing a little DJ tour.

My background in music is as a singer and a woodwind player. I studied music in school, but I am an autodidact when it comes to the programming side of things. The voice is always the focus of my work.

Does anyone in your family make music?

I am one of the only ones who take it seriously. My father and his father before him were drummers, and my mom studied flute. □ □

When did you decide to get into music?

I was very young, always singing in a choir in primary school, and even before that would sing along to whatever movies my parents introduced me to — Disney magic kids stuff kind of thing. I was always singing.

When did you release your first song?

I like to think that my generation was a bit unfortunate because instead of recording to tape and hiding it in a shoebox under your bed, your first tunes were put on the shoebox that is the web. I was taking advantage of MySpace and Last.fm in my early teens and definitely put a lot of

insane experiments up to that I'm embarrassed about now. But I think that's everyone's first go at making music. My early explorations with music were kind of weird pop songs.

I didn't have a mic so I'd ring up my friend who had a laptop and sing down the landline into his laptop mic. The result was noisy and distorted, even though the starting idea was a song. I like to think this very much influenced how I want to merge the musical with the textural, especially with the voice as the focal point.

□ What digital audio workstation are you using? Why?

Ableton mainly, also still love Audacity for some editing things. I think you can do almost anything in any program at this point, so it sort of does not matter...

Your music is far from mainstream. I don't personally know anyone who is into glitch, for example. What made you want to pursue those as opposed to more popular hip-hop and EDM?

I don't think it was a conscious decision, I only make and respond to the music that excites me. I don't think in terms of popularity. I am just making my truth.

You've accomplished a lot in your career. How was working with Meredith Monk?

This was nearly 10 years ago, and I was more of an intern. But finding out about her oeuvre was fascinating, and she was a lovely woman to get to know. It gave me an impression of someone who is an institution, with so much archive and work behind them, really aware of their craft, always searching for the next thing. Inspiring.

How did it feel when your work was nominated for Prix Ars Electronica? Did you feel like you've finally gotten somewhere?

Hard to say, it was a little thrill but overall not such a big deal. I think rewards are meaningful when they come from within: when I feel I nailed the concept for a piece, that is more satisfying and exciting than any award.

How's the music community in your city?

I am right outside New York City, so of course, it's perfect.

You've worked with so many various artists. Who was your favorite artist to collaborate with?

It varies. Some collaborations are very intense, others super remote. I am not sure I have a favorite. I like working with AGF, but she is mostly a producer and solo artist, so I enjoy pushing her to do something she usually doesn't do, for example, I've had her do visual artwork for my album or mastering. Something she is not as much known for. That's been fun.

How did it feel when radio stations such as Resonance FM and BBC featuring you?

It doesn't matter which station it is; radio is just generally exciting for me, it represents something a little more chaotic and mysterious to me, the fact that someone could be in their car and tune into me, perhaps by chance...

How do you market your music these days?

I think I function mostly on instinct at this point when it comes to putting my work out into the world. I don't view it as much as marketing as just baseline responsibility. Like making sure your child goes to kindergarten or something. You can't do work that you feel so strongly about and then just let it stagnate. You have to bridge it out to the larger world.

How do you motivate yourself to work on music when life gets busy? Or do you just stop for a bit?

Good question. I am always working on some small project or other at all times, but sometimes with big projects like my own solo records, the cycle is more like the tide. Sometimes i am in a rush to edit 5 pieces at once, and then weeks go by where i have to let it sit and can't touch it. I am working on music every day though. Even for an hour. There is always something in the pipeline.

How can one manage his passion for music and going to school or working full-time in your opinion? If you care enough about something, the effort just presents itself. It's not difficult.

What was your first thought when you've heard BBC radio calling your music "the most intriguing mix of electronic pop song and acoustic composition?"

I guess i wasn't that bothered, and It's not really up to me what the rest of the world thinks of my music. I think that's a nice compliment though.

Do you have any other hobbies besides music? It's good to rest from producing and go to the gym or something once in a while.

I would never step inside a gym, but i hike and am in nature often. Love to cook as well. And movies can provide a nice escape at the end of the night.

Tell us about your latest DJ tour. This doesn't sound like something you'd usually do. How did it feel to leave your comfort zone of abstract/noise solo work and switch the genres almost wholly?

I am not sure my solo work is a comfort zone, as I am always pushing myself on those shows, so the DJ thing was kind of a reaction to that. I wanted to stop working so hard at every gig for a little while, I did a zillion solo shows last year, so this winter I wanted a bit of a break, but still to perform.

At the same time, I had just come off doing a weekly radio show for radio.computer, and while that filled the same kind of urge to share my iTunes library with the world, DJ-style, It was exhausting coming up with a pre-formatted hour every week. This tour is the best of both worlds. I get to play music I adore and dance, but it isn't stressful.

Was DJing different from everything you've done before? Did you love it or hate it?
Not so different. I definitely love it.

What was the best thing that happened to you during this tour?

I met Rebecca Goldberg, who is a good friend and our first IRL meeting. She came to NYC. It was absolutely fantastic to be able to hang with her and exchange ideas finally. We're doing it again in Detroit in March.

Any big projects coming up in 2019?

I am in the middle of producing for a few people and working on a very personal new solo record.

How about a couple of words of encouragement for upcoming producers before we wrap up?

Be honest with yourself and go go go.

Where can people get in touch with you?

@derekpiotr on most platforms, and on my website derekpiotr.com